

Victoria ran, afraid to look back in case any of the silver insect-things were following her and afraid not to look, in case they were right behind! She skidded on a patch of loose gravel and scrambled breathlessly up the last ridge. From it she could see the expedition's rocket ship, a sleek needle standing upright against the pale rocks that surrounded the landing site.

There was no time for sight-seeing. She hurled herself down the slope, panting at the exertions she had undergone. Young women of her generation were not expected to engage in physical exercise overmuch, and she wondered if that had been a mistake. Her lungs felt as if they were afire; her legs were heavy as lead. Still she drove herself on. Her friends needed help.

She paused only far a second at the base of the ladder, then, setting her jaw, she hauled herself up the rungs toward the open airlock. At least climbing used a different set of muscles! Finally she hauled herself over the edge of the entry and collapsed onto the metal floor. Relief flooded through her and she almost swooned.

"Well now, what have we here?"

She forced her head up to look at the source of the words, delivered in that irritating colonial accent. The Captain. She couldn't remember his name, and felt vaguely embarrassed by the fact. He reached down a strong hand and hauled her to her feet.

"I thought I had made myself clear," he drawled, "that no one was to enter my ship until repairs are complete!"

Victoria noticed the way his eyes travelled up and down her form, and she thrust up her chin and glared at him while attempting to brush off the worst of the dust and straighten the line of the ridiculous dress that the Doctor had urged on her. No wonder he was staring - why the hem barely reached her knees! She was still panting, and when she opened her mouth to speak only a croak came out. She recalled a trip to Europe where she had walked to the foot of the Matterhorn with her father. The air was thinner there; breath hard to catch. She wondered if the TARDIS had landed them high in a mountain range.

"I guess I'm just going to have to make myself a bit clearer on the matter!" With that the Captain pulled Victoria over to one of the cabinets that stood at various points in the room and pushed her face down over it. She wanted to protest, but all her muscles were still shaking from her efforts in getting here, and on her own she could barely stand. She wanted to speak, to shout that the party was in danger from deadly silver crawlers, but her throat was hot and raw and the words would not come. At the back of her mind was the small doubt about what she had done. The Captain \*had\* told everyone to stay away. She \*had\* disobeyed his orders, even if it was in a good cause.

He looked down at the young woman sprawled over the nav-panel. He'd only

intended to have a bit of a joke at first, but Vic had taken him seriously. Hell, maybe she did deserve this. It could be she \*was\* the actual saboteur. And she had a real nice ass! Chuckling to himself he smacked her lightly a couple of times. The half-globes of her buttocks hidden beneath her dress jiggled appealingly with each slap. He heard only a soft 'oh' from Vic. Unable to resist the impulse he raised the hem of her dress, revealing a pair of cream knickers quite unlike anything he was familiar with. His next smack was a little harder, and Vic's head turned to one side her eyes wide as she realised that he had lifted her skirt. She started to push herself upright, but it took little effort to hold her in position with one hand.

"What's the matter, Vic? You starting to think twice about coming up here?" He slapped another couple of times before he heard the words that she was trying to say.

"I beg you to stop! Please! The expedition is in danger."

Immediately he pulled the girl upright. "What's that? What's happening?"

Victoria composed herself and icily explained the situation at the Tombs. He could only stare at her as she recited her story. Once it was finished he turned to the inter-ship address to speak to the rest of his men.

"One moment," she requested. As he turned back with a questioning look she slapped him hard across the face. "That is for the humiliation of

raising my skirt. You are not a gentlemen!" With that she stalked away on unsteady legs and stood facing the wall with her back to him.

He shrugged. Who could understand dames.